



DIVISION OF FIRE SAFETY

OFFICE OF THE STATE FIRE MARSHAL, STATE FIRE ACADEMY AND THE STATE HAZ-MAT TEAM

FIRE SAFETY NEWS

December 2014



Inside this issue:

Winter hazards Message	1
Holiday safety	2
Holiday safety continued	3
Fire station Visits	4
Winter Fires	5
NFIRS Reporting	6
Holiday Safety	7
Calendar of Fire Events	8
Contact Information	9

WINTER BRINGS ADDITIONAL HAZARDS

It's that time of the year again, we spend more time indoors and trying to find a way to keep our families warm and safe. Although most people think they are safest in their own homes, homes are actually where we are at greatest risk of fire death. The nonprofit National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) estimates that 3,145 people died nationwide in home fires in 2003. More than 80 percent of fatal fires occur in the home. The Vermont Division of Fire Safety and your local Fire Department want to keep Vermonters safe and hold down the number of fires this season. But we need your help. Here's what you can do:

- Make sure your home is protected with working smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors, Locate alarms close to where you sleep.
- Check the vents for your heating system to make sure they are not blocked by snow; take a close look at direct vents that are located lower down on walls. A blocked vent can lead to Carbon Monoxide backing up into your home.
- Make sure that all emergency exits and outside stairs or fire escapes are clear of ice and snow.
- Store fireplace ashes in a fire resistant container and cover it with a lid and keep the container outdoors and away from combustibles.
- Make use of safe practices when using gasoline-powered generators or alternative heating units during winter weather-related power outages. CO that is produced from these units can kill in minutes. Consumers should never use a generator, charcoal or gas grill inside of a building.
- Know where your fire extinguisher is, check it to make sure it is full, keep it in a readily available location. A fire extinguisher should be inspected annually by a qualified person.
- If there is a fire hydrant near your building get it shoveled out, hydrants should be clear for three feet in every direction.
- During heavy snow events inspect barns and other buildings for signs of weakening or collapse. Utilize safe practices when removing snow buildup on roofs.
- Avoid overexertion when shoveling snow. Take frequent breaks. Overexertion can bring on a heart attack. If you must shovel snow, stretch before going outside.

For additional safety information consult with the local firefighters in your area. Or contact the Vermont Division of Fire Safety at 800-640-2106 or Vermont Emergency Management at 800-347-0488.



The Division of Fire Safety would like to wish you all a happy and fire safe holiday season.



DIVISION OF FIRE SAFETY

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Help Your Family, Friends, and Neighbors Have a Fire Safe Holiday Season.

FIRE SAFETY SHOULD NEVER BE ALLOWED TO TAKE A HOLIDAY

The holiday season typically is one of the deadliest times of the year for home fires. Every year, Vermont's emergency responders respond to numerous incidents during the holiday season where people suffer injuries, burns, and even death due to carelessness with holiday decorations. Trees, lights, candles, ornaments, fireplaces, cooking and wood stoves all produce extra hazards in the home at a time when hectic activity distracts many Vermonters attention from fire safety.

The Division of Fire Safety urges fire departments to take actions this holiday season to raise awareness of home fire safety. Here are a few safety tips that emergency responders can share with family, friends, and neighbors to remind them about how to Stop a holiday fire before it starts.

Cooking Safety

The leading cause of fires in the kitchen is unattended cooking.

To prevent cooking fires, you must be alert. You won't be alert if you are sleepy, have consumed alcohol, or have taken medicine or drugs that make you drowsy.

Keep anything that can catch fire — oven mitts, wooden utensils, food packaging, towels, or curtains — away from your stovetop.

Home Heating Safety

All heaters need space. Keep things that can burn, such as paper, bedding, or furniture, at least 3 feet (1 meter) away from heating equipment.

Make sure all fuel-burning vented equipment is vented to the outside to avoid carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning. Carbon monoxide is created when fuels burn incompletely. Carbon monoxide poisoning can cause illness and even death. Make sure the venting for exhaust is kept clear and unobstructed. This includes removal of snow and ice around the outlet to the outside.

Install wood burning stoves, chimney connectors, and chimneys following the manufacturer's instructions or have a professional do the installation.

Maintain heating equipment and chimneys by having them cleaned and inspected annually by a qualified professional.

In wood stoves, burn only dry, seasoned wood. In pellet stoves, burn only dry, seasoned good quality wood pellets.

Never use gas or electric cooking stoves to heat the home. They are not intended for that purpose and can pose a CO or fire hazard.



Holiday Decorating Safety

Make sure your natural tree is a fresh one. Fresh needles won't break when you bend them. Once you get your fresh tree home, cut off one to two inches of the trunk and place it in a stable holder. Keep the holder full of water, and the tree away from sources of heat, to keep your tree from drying out.

Never put tree branches or needles in a fireplace or wood burning stove. When the tree becomes dry, discard it promptly. The best way to dispose of your tree is by taking it to a recycling center or having it hauled away by a community pick-up service.

Use only flame-proof decorations, and check the wiring on all your electrical decorations before you put them up.

Do not overload electrical outlets. Do not link more than three light strands, unless the directions indicate it is safe. Make sure your electrical decorations are tested and labeled.

Dispose Wood Ashes Safely

Whenever you burn firewood or wood pellets in your wood stove, fireplace, or fireplace insert, you will create ashes that need to be removed and disposed of properly. Improper ash disposal have become a common cause of many building fires and is a potentially serious threat to the safety of Vermont families and their homes.

Dispose of wood ashes in a metal container that can be tightly closed, douse with water, place the closed container outside your home about 10 feet away from combustible materials and leave in the container for several days before disposing of them.



Candles

Never put lit candles on a tree and Do not go near a Christmas tree with an open flame - candles, lighters or matches.

Never leave a burning candle unattended. Avoid using candles in bedrooms and sleeping areas. Extinguish candles when you leave a room. Keep children and pets away from burning candles.



Consider using battery-operated flameless candles, which can look, smell, and feel like real candles.

Smoking

Keep an extra eye on friends and family members who smoke. Make sure that ashes and lit cigarettes don't fall onto chairs, gifts, or wrapping paper. Don't empty cigarette ashtrays into the trash.

Never Smoke in a Home Where Oxygen is Used. Never smoke while using oxygen or are anywhere near an oxygen source, even if it is turned off. Oxygen can be explosive and makes fire burn hotter and faster.

Smoke / Carbon Monoxide Alarms and Escape Plans

Working smoke and carbon monoxide alarms should be a priority at any time of year. Take an extra minute to ensure all your home fire safety devices are prepared for the holidays.

Clean and test your smoke alarm and make sure that everyone in your home (including guests) knows how to escape if a fire occurs. Assign an adult to help very young, elderly or anyone else who needs help getting out. Choose a safe meeting place outside and plan to call the fire department from the neighbor's.

Other Fire Safety Tips

Shovel out fire hydrants and building exits. If there is a fire hydrant near your home you can assist the fire department by keeping the hydrant clear of snow so in the event it is needed, it can be located.

Make sure Fire escapes, are clear of snow, and can readily find and access them during an emergency. Back doors and other exits should also be kept clear of snow and ice.

Keep gas meters and appliance vents clear of snow and ice, If a vent is obstructed, an appliance may malfunction and create a dangerous build-up of carbon monoxide.

Snow and ice accumulation may impede emergency access to gas meters and could interfere with equipment operation.

Be careful when using snow plows and don't push or pile snow around meters.

Frozen water pipes? Never try to thaw them with a blow torch or other open flame, otherwise the pipe could conduct the heat and ignite the wall structure inside the wall space. Use hot water or a laboratory tested device such as a hand held dryer for thawing.

If windows are used as emergency exits in your home, practice using them in the event fire should strike. **Be sure that all the windows open easily.**



From Everyone at the Division of Fire Safety

**Have a Happy
and
Fire Safe
Holiday Season**

For more information on this or other safety issues, please contact your local fire department. use their non-emergency number. or The State of Vermont Division of Fire Safety at 800- 640-2106 or log on to NFPA.org or firesafety.vermont.gov

Batman and the Unexpected Fire Station Visit

Throughout every facet of the fire service, those who came before us tried to break down many concepts to something easy to remember so that it could be called up quickly when faced with pressure. From 'Try Before you pry' to 'RECEO VS' and so many others, these little acronyms and mnemonic devices and other memory aids have helped out many a firefighter. Well, in honor of Batman's 75th anniversary, I'd like to share one that I've taught firefighters when it comes to remembering how to get the most out of a fire station visit, especially those unplanned 'stop in' visits we often get from families. Of course, most visitors would be happy just to get a quick tour and see the apparatus, but these are moments where we can maximize our effectiveness at delivering fire safety messages.

Your visitors are there by choice, and might leave at any time, so having a plan already established that gets the important messages out while not forgetting all of the 'fun stuff' is good to have in your back pocket. The following is an order of events that maximizes messaging while making sure you don't forget all of the pieces of a fire station visit: You can remember it this way: 'I'm Batman'

All you have to do when your guests arrive is to think about how Batman fights crime, and you will have the order in which you do your tour.

1. The Bat Signal: How does batman first find out that he is needed? The bat signal. After you greet your guests, let them know exactly what will happen if a call comes in, especially what they can expect to hear and what they can expect you to do. And it's a great time to talk to everyone about dialing '9-1-1', and talking to kids about knowing their street address, and the addresses of other places that they might often stay, such as a relative's house, should they need to call 9-1-1 from there.

2. The BatCave: Briefly give them a general overview of your station without giving a physical tour yet (i.e. we have a bunk room over there and an office over there, a work out room down there, a kitchen over there, etc.) explaining how your fire department works as you talk about each area of the station.

3. The Bat Suit: Before Bruce Wayne heads out to save the day, he changes into his Batsuit. Now is the time for showing them your gear, donning and doffing all of your PPE, including airpack. Then to talk about 'Never fear a firefighter in gear' to kids and let them know what you might sound and look like in a fire. This would also be the time to tell adults how your gear is constructed, how the airpack works, how things are maintained (and, sometimes, how much it costs – maybe that's the part where you thank them for paying their taxes.)



4. The Batmobile: You guessed it, NOW it's time to show them the apparatus. And don't forget all of your cool Batman-like gadgets! While you are describing tools and equipment and there is a break (like when you move from one piece of apparatus to another) you can ask whether or not they have tested their smoke alarm recently, whether they have a meeting place and practice fire drills in their home.

5. Wayne Manor: When Batman comes home, he goes back to Wayne Manor. This is the time to show them around other rooms in the station, such as offices, radio rooms, day rooms, etc. (If you have a space appropriate for it, this would be a time for kids to talk about Stop, Drop, Roll and Cover Your Face.) Your tour should always end at the same place, at a spot where you have stocked, ahead of time, take-home fire safety education materials, such as pamphlets, and any other take-home items, like pencils or coloring books or plastic helmets. Remember that they are leaving your stately Wayne Manor for theirs, and it will help you to remember to give them the take-home items.

Many fire safety publications are available on our website www.firesafety.vermont.gov and can be downloaded and printed out free of charge. And look to our yearly fire safety calendar (at least one is sent to every fire chief) for some of the most important fire safety messages that you should stress on your tour, some of them coinciding with the seasons. As always, you can contact Asst. State Fire Marshal Mike Greenia, head of our Fire Safety Education Section if you need help or advice on how best to maximize your time with the public and what resources are available.

PUT A THERMOMETER ON FREEZE WINTER FIRES

Home fires occur more in winter than in any other season. As you stay cozy and warm this winter season, **be fire smart!**

Half of all home heating fires occur in the months of



Heating equipment is involved in **1** in every **6** reported **home fires** and **1** in every **5** home fire deaths.

Keep anything that can burn at least

3 feet from any heat source like fireplaces, wood stoves, radiators, or space heaters.



Keep portable generators outside, away from windows, and as far away as possible from your house.

Install and test carbon monoxide alarms at least **once a month.**



Have a qualified professional clean and inspect your chimney and vents **every year.**



Store cooled ashes in a tightly covered metal container, and keep it outside at least

10 feet

from your home and any nearby buildings.

Plug only **1** heat-producing appliance (such as a space heater) into an electrical outlet at a time.



For more information on how to prevent winter fires, visit www.usfa.fema.gov/winter/ and www.nfpa.org/winter/





National Fire Incident Reporting System

Fighting Fire with Facts

It's Time to Get Your Reports Up-to-Date!



NFIRS is the fire service's tool to report its emergency responses. It is the largest incident-based database in the world. Incidents are reported every 1.5 seconds and a fire incident was reported every 25 seconds. The sheer size of this database with more than 35 years of incidents makes it a valuable tool at the local, state, and national levels.

The fire service should be reporting all of its emergency response incidents to NFIRS. The numbers tell the fire service's story, and only the fire service can best tell its story. In our ever-changing world, the fire service's first line of defense is timely accurate information that is shared, integrated, analyzed, and acted upon quickly and effectively. Since NFIRS is becoming more open and visible to its users, the fire service must make it count by caring about its data and sharing its data.

**The deadline for submitting all 2014 reports is
January 18, 2015 !**

Fire department reporting is required by state law. And each fire department is required to submit their emergency incident data reports to the Vermont State Fire Marshal's Office in accordance with Vermont Law 20 V.S.A. Section 2833.

The Division of Fire Safety continues to thank those departments that report valid incident reports on a timely bases. These reports are being used at the state and national level to make decisions that will affect public safety and the fire service for years to come.

On our website there will be a report listing the current data entry status of Vermont's fire departments -- if your department is behind please make every effort to get caught up as soon as possible.

For additional Incident Reporting Resources or information please visit:

http://firesafety.vermont.gov/fire_investigation/vfirs/

Please include: Your department name, FDID #, and the account user name. We will reset the account to the default password as soon as possible. Please note, due to the massive volume of phone calls we receive this time of year, we are not able to accept reset requests by phone. An email allows us to re-set you faster.

NEW IN-STATE NFIRS RESET HELP DESK.

In an effort to better support Vermont's departments and to increase the timely resets of NFIRS accounts, DFS is please to announce the implementation of new in-state NFIRS reset help desk.

All reset inquiries should now be sent to dps.vfirs@state.vt.us or requested by calling 800-640-2106 m-f 8-4.

In your e-mail be sure to include: Your department name, FDID #, and the account user name

Winter Holiday Safety

Winter holidays are a time for families and friends to get together. But that also means a greater risk for fire. Following a few simple tips will ensure a happy and fire-safe holiday season.

HOLIDAY DECORATING

- » Be careful with holiday decorations. Choose decorations that are flame resistant or flame retardant.
- » Keep lit candles away from decorations and other things that can burn.
- » Some lights are only for indoor or outdoor use, but not both.
- » Replace any string of lights with worn or broken cords or loose bulb connections. Connect no more than three strands of mini light sets and a maximum of 50 bulbs for screw-in bulbs. Read manufacturer's instructions for number of LED strands to connect.
- » Use clips, not nails, to hang lights so the cords do not get damaged.
- » Keep decorations away from windows and doors.



HOLIDAY ENTERTAINING

- » Test your smoke alarms and tell guests about your home fire escape plan.
- » Keep children and pets away from lit candles.
- » Keep matches and lighters up high in a locked cabinet.
- » Stay in the kitchen when cooking on the stovetop.
- » Ask smokers to smoke outside. Remind smokers to keep their smoking materials with them so young children do not touch them.
- » Provide large, deep ashtrays for smokers. Wet cigarette butts with water before discarding.



Before Heading Out or to Bed

Blow out lit candles when you leave the room or go to bed. **Turn off** all light strings and decorations before leaving home or going to bed.

FACTS

- ❗ **Two of every five** home decoration fires are started by candles.
- ❗ **Nearly half** of holiday decoration fires happen because decorations are placed too close to a heat source.



Your Source for **SAFETY** Information

NFPA Public Education Division • 1 Batterymarch Park, Quincy, MA 02169

www.nfpa.org/education



State of Vermont Dept of Public Safety

Division of Fire Safety

www.firesafety.vermont.gov

CALENDAR OF FIRE EVENTS

December 2014

SUN	MO	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			



Happy Holidays

*Wishing you all a warm and safe
Holiday Season*

Date	Event	Location
2	Electrical Board Meeting	BERLIN
7	Pearl Harbor	ALL
8	Access Board Meeting	BERLIN
9	Elevator Board Meeting	BERLIN
17	Division Training	BERLIN
21	Winter Begins	ALL
25	Christmas Day	ALL
31	New Years Eve	ALL

January 2015

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
HAPPY NEW YEAR				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

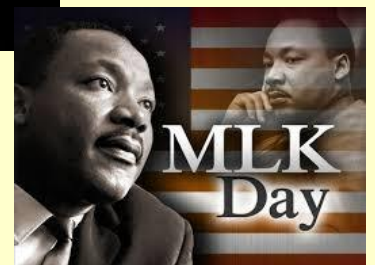
~BOARD DEADLINE REMINDER~

If you have a board agenda item, it needs to be received at the Central Office no later than 2 weeks prior to the board meeting. (for all boards – Access, Electrical, Elevator & Plumbing)

BOARD MEETING DATES

Plumbing Board Meeting: January 13, 2015, 10AM
Access: January 26, 2015, 1:30PM

Date	Event	Location
1	New Year's Day	ALL
13	Plumbing Board	BERLIN
19	Martin Luther King Day	ALL
26	Access Board	BERLIN





State of Vermont Division of Fire Safety

DECEMBER 2014

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FIRESAFETY.VERMONT.GOV

*To be added to the monthly newsletter email
mailing list contact the Central Office
(802) 479-7561*

**REMEMBER Smoke Detectors, Fire Sprinklers and Carbon
Monoxide Detectors Save Lives**

Vermont Department of Public Safety

Division of Fire Safety

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DIVISION OF STATE POLICE—FIRE INVESTIGATION

Waterbury—103 South Main Street, Waterbury, VT 05671-2101— (802) 244-8781—Fax (802) 241-5371